

Without You by **YinTheMoonGoddess**

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Summary: Takes place during the 353 days Mileven was separated and goes into depth at their reunion. TRIGGER WARNING mentions of suicide, depression, self harm, cutting, and a very sad Mike Wheeler

Without You

Mike

He had done it ever since day 136. He had just finished calling El that night and tears were streaming down his face. His mother had taken Holly to see a movie. His father was asleep in his chair. Nancy was out with Steve. Mike was alone.

Recently, he had heard about people that were so depressed that they cut themselves, burned themselves, and bruised themselves. And Mike was definitely depressed.

Mike knew where the razor blades were. He was in such a terrible state that cutting seemed like a good idea, a coping mechanism. So, he retrieved the blade, and made the first cut. Turning the emotions into something he could see was relaxing. The pain on his wrists and forearms mirrored the pain in his head and heart.

As the weeks passed, it became an addiction. Mike was absolutely hooked on the sharp sting of the blade, the crimson running down his arm. He missed her so much. Eleven. He still called her every night, though he didn't mention the cuts.

That summer, Mike Wheeler stayed inside. He wore long sleeves. He discovered that burning himself was calming too.

Eleven, I miss you so much. It's so hard without you here. I just feel different, incomplete. I think about you all the time and wish you were here.

It wasn't just Eleven's absence that was driving Mike up the wall, it was also the fact that everyone was acting like none of the stuff with the Upside Down and the Demigorgon had happened. Life was proceeding as normal.

But things were different too. Will was having flashbacks and visions that Dustin and Lucas didn't know about. Hopper would always nod at them whenever he saw them. Steve was less of an asshole. Mike would never see the hallways of his school or that place in his

basement or eggo waffles the same way.

The day Will found out about Mike's cutting was the day that Mike found out about Will's insomnia. Now Mike had someone to confide in. But it wasn't enough.

Eleven, it's still hard, I still cut, I still miss you. I wish you were here. I'm depressed and you always made me feel better.

Mike thought about suicide many times. Too many times to remember. He had a note ready to go in case he decided to go to the quarry and hurl himself in. Without her it seemed like there was no point to life. His grades were slipping and so were his sanity and physical and mental health.

Everything's gone to shit without you El. It's just so hard without you.

Eleven

He had been calling her every day. She had heard, and it broke her heart to not be able to respond to him. When she wasn't thinking about him, she was trapped. It could be the Upside Down, the lab, the woods, or her own mind. She also had nightmares. She had terrible, wake-up-screaming nightmares that haunted her.

Even when she was with Kallie she missed him. She missed his smile. She missed the way he always took charge and knew how to make her feel better.

When she saw him struggling in her mind, something awoke inside of her. She couldn't kill people like Kallie could. She needed to see him, to touch him, to help him and the rest of her friends. 353 days was too long. She wasn't about to let it be a moment longer.

She hopped on the bus and hoped that she could help them. Hoped that she could save them in time.

They were all talking strategy when she arrived. But she didn't care. All that mattered was him. When they hugged, it was like all was right with the world. Nothing existed in that moment but the two of them.

"I can't loose you again." He had said.

She would make sure he didn't.

Mike

He was so relieved that she had come home. Finally, after almost a year. She was here, and it would all get better.

Later, in the wee hours of the morning, after it was all over, everyone was sprawled out across Joyce Byers' living room. He and El shared the couch.

She was exhausted from using so much power to close the gate. She was nestled up against his side. He looked at her and kissed her forehead while she slept. She sighed and snuggled up next to him even more.

Mike couldn't sleep. He was too busy thinking. He thought about what had just happened, but mostly, he just thought about her. He wondered what she would think of Hawkins, her new life. But he also wondered if she would accept him. Mike Wheeler and all of his scars that he hides. His cuts, burns, and bruises, old and new.

Suddenly, the air seemed toxic. He was having trouble breathing right, thinking straight. He had to get out of there, it was too stressful.

He stood up, and, being careful not to disturb her, he laid her down in a comfortable position and draped a blanket over her

Then, gathering his thoughts, he gently opened the door and left for Castle Byers.

Eleven

She was only half asleep when he left. She was too content and comfortable in his arms to move. But then his breath started quickening and he was out of the door.

But he didn't leave before making sure she was comfortable. He had ever so gently draped the blanket over her and she felt like one of

those people that she had seen on the television, so in love.

He seemed upset. Was it something she had done? No. It wasn't. That was when she decided to follow him. She took the blanket and walked out after him.

He was walking slowly. She was careful not to be seen or heard. They came across a fort, Castle Byers. He crawled inside. Eleven debated going back to the house until she heard his sobs.

"Mike?" She asked, crawling in, "what's wrong?"

He looked startled. His hand flew to his sleeve as he pulled it up. "Uh, nothing's wrong...I just...needed some air." He said, wiping away a tear on his neck.

"Mike. Friends don't lie" her hands gently tilted his face so he was at eye level with her.

"Okay," He said as she wiped away his tears, "but just let me say it all first, okay?" He asked. She nodded, getting in a more comfortable position.

"When you were gone, I was really sad. I thought it was my fault that you left, and I missed you so much. I was in a really bad place mentally, and I had this thing called depression."

Mike, seeing Eleven's confusion, explained more.

"It's when you feel really sad all the time and you feel like you're alone. Sometimes you even hurt yourself and kill yourself. I just started hurting myself as a way to calm myself down. I was in a really bad place and I missed you so much." As he finished his voice cracked and he started crying again.

She was quick to take him into her arms in a hug. He was holding her waist and sobbing into her neck. Gently, she took his arm, the one he had tried to cover with his sleeve. She rolled it up.

Bruises, cuts, burns, and scars were scattered all over it like a splatter painting. She gasped and looked up at him. But he wouldn't meet her eyes. She softly planted a kiss on one of the bruises.

"Mike, never do that again. Please never do that again." Now they were both crying.

They shifted their bodies until they were in the same position that they were in on the couch. El had draped the blanket over the two of them. She watched as he drifted off to sleep. He pulled her closer and mumbled occasionally. She drifted off not long after.

Mike

It took him a minute to process where he was when he woke up. Yes, Eleven was back. No, this was not just a fantasy. Then Mike thought about how worried everybody would be to wake up and find them missing. He whispered into her ear

"Wake up El, we have to go back to the house." She groaned as she woke up. He thought it was really cute.

The two went back to the house to find that Jonathan was in the kitchen making breakfast. He seemed to be the only one awake.

"Have fun out there you two?" He asked with a chuckle.

"Yes. We did." Eleven responded with a smirk as she pulled Mike out of the kitchen, leaving a stunned Jonathan behind.

They yet again settled on the couch. He pulled her into a hug and whispered into her ear. "I'm so happy you're back. I don't know what I would have done without you."

She just kissed him in response and all was right with the world.